

up a tree but were afraid of flying rocks. It was common knowledge, just like the knowledge you were supposed to drive away dogs by hitting them with a big stick. No one, however, had ever suggested you could bring down a running antelope with a well-thrown rock.

"Baby..." he shrugged, gesticulating helplessly. "Baby."

Ta-den hefted the stone again, looking down at the boy, nodding slowly to himself, eyes half closed. "Good Baby." An extremely female thing to say, though they'd heard the phrase enough as children. When a female said it, you felt warm indeed. "Jar. Don."

Om-at looked at his friend with renewed respect, then back down at Baby. "Jar-don." It was a good name, very suggestive. Don, the generic, genderless word for a "person." Jar, the word you used to describe any type of animal you'd never seen before. He patted Baby on the head. "Jar-don."

The boy smiled up at him.

Three more summers went by and things were going very poorly in the valley. The dry summers had added up to a real drought, something outside living memory, the river shrunken and muddy, some of the smaller streams drying right up. Game was sparse and foraging poor, worse still because the tor-o-don band was competing with them for plant food, invading their territory on a regular basis, making the adenen-yo females troublesome. And waz-ho-don males from O-lo-a's tribe were beginning to come upriver again in search of ever more elusive small game.

On some days the sky seemed hazy now, with a funny smell that made your hair prickle uneasily. The only ray of hope was something unexpected: they'd been joined by three new males, an ad-yo kicked out of O-lo-a's camp for no reason anyone could figure out. Since Ko-tan died, no one male had been able to take his place; there was a great deal of fighting among the males, Low Women restive and mean-tempered, held in check only by O-lo-a's dead blue eyes and Pan-at-lee's muscle.

Om-at and Ta-den sat on the brow of the low hill they'd staked out for themselves, squinting in the sunshine, looking down on the dusty camp. These days, it seemed full of people. The newcomers, an amorphous mass of captured tor-o-don females, youngsters and children born over the years since adenen-yo had come into being. More than adenen-yo now, certainly. Om-at understood that they'd formed a new tribe. More than that, a new *kind* of tribe, one that suited him more than O-lo-a's ever had. Sometimes, when he dreamed, he could still taste Ko-tan in his mouth, warm and delicious.

These were bad days, though, the worst days anyone could remember. In O-lo-a's tribe, people must be angry. Without a steady flow of guest-gifts, no one would be having sex. Here, no guest-gifts were required for sex, the females simply did what you wanted, when you wanted. But they'd grown accustomed to eating meat, so much so that it seemed a necessity rather than an occasional rich treat.

Sometimes, Om-at and Ta-den would climb up to the rim of the valley and stand looking out at the

world, which they remembered as having been more or less green. The broad plains were brown now, and empty. Even the distant mountains, where the knuckle-walkers were supposed to live, seemed dry and dead. The sky was cloudless, but a pale gray pall drifted low over everything.

Now they sat staring at the crowded camp. Knowing each other's thoughts through long familiarity. Finally, Om-at grunted and said, "Adenen-yo. Food. Die." He looked over at Ta-den, whose eyes seemed shut. "O-lo-a. Kill. Tor-o-don. Kill."

Ta-den opened his eyes and looked at him. For Om-at, that was a long, painful, significant cluster of words. "No. Adenen-yo kill." That female phrasing again. Sometimes Ta-den could be scary.

Om-at thumped his fist on the ground, then pointed. "Adenen-yo." The original five. "Ad-yo." The newcomers. "Adad. Jar-don." They were down there together, Jar-don and five younger friends, a grouping the waz-ho-don nervously called "adad." Down there now, playing with a couple of young half-breed females. Even the tor-o-don females seemed to be more relaxed around them, finding them more familiar than the little waz-ho-don males. "Adenen-yo. Ad-yo. Adad." He stared hard at Ta-den. "O-lo-a. Kill. Tor-o-don. Kill."

Ta-den stared back, frowning. Finally, he said, "Food. Tor-o-don. Sex. O-lo-a kill."

Om-at nodded, sealing the bargain. "Moonlight," he said.

And then, moonlight time. Fourteen males entered O-lo-a's camp that night, eight waz-ho-don, Jar-don and his five young friends, not bothering with stealth, striding into the clearing with their sticks and hunting stones ready. There might be as many as twenty adult waz-ho-don males remaining in the camp, but Om-at knew they had nothing to fear from them. Jar-don's adad, by themselves, could beat them all. The real danger was O-lo-a. O-lo-a and Pan-at-lee and, behind them, the collective mass of the Low Women. Individually, they were no stronger, no bigger than any waz-ho-don male, but the Low Women always worked together, many hands as one, working toward a common goal. Or to defeat any single challenger.

Om-at stepped forward quickly, anxious to get started. The sooner this was over, the sooner he would sleep easily again.

People were stirring everywhere now, eyes opening all over the camp, reflecting moonlight, mouths opening to murmur amazement and anger. Adenen-yo? Here? A male stood, jumping before Om-at, barking his group's challenge-word. Om-at hit him in the head, kicking him as he fell, stepping over the still body.

"O-lo-a!" he shouted. The Low Women were up now, moving in a dark, murmuring mass, stamping their feet, already angry. Little knots of men were getting together here and there, forming up into their yo-bands, eyes wide and fearful, moving to the periphery of the camp. This was Women's business, the chastising of men. Look what had happened when O-lo-a let herself be talked into sending Ko-tan to do the job.

"O-lo-a!" Up on her hill, of course, watching. And

thousands of years: mighty time-dreadnoughts patrolling in the "strat" guard it, and the Imperial Archives are buffered against the effects of all possible Reality Wars. But the Empire is menaced by enemies on its futureward frontier, and by cultists who worship demons in the gulf of Virtual Time. Recommended, for its gorgeous campness as well as its ideas.

#### **The Soul of the Robot** (Doubleday, 1974)

Novel. Jasperodus the robot believes he is conscious and self-aware. But for thousands of years it has been known that only human beings can be conscious, and robots, however intelligent, lack the spark. If robots can do everything human beings can do, what is consciousness? And, for that matter, how can human beings prove they really are conscious, and not just acting as if they were? A picaresque in which our hero attempts to resolve the mystery of his origin and being by various means, (including a memorable Indefatigable Steel Phallus). Highly recommended.

#### **The Garments of Caeon** (Doubleday, 1976)

Novel. Man's natural form is lumpy, adventitious, and incomplete. Clothes make the man. On the worlds of the Caeon cluster, clothes appear to practically control the man. How has this remarkable social setup evolved? And is there something menacing behind it? Need you ask? (The UK edition – Fontana, 1978 – is expanded.)

#### **The Grand Wheel** (DAW, 1977)

Novel. The master criminals who control the great Gambling syndicates are the real powers in human space. Now they want to play the masters of the Universe – with humanity as the stake! How far up this hierarchy can the winners go? And what are the prizes at the top levels? And just why are the laws of physics quite so arbitrary?

#### **The Knights of the Limits** (Allison & Busby, 1978)

Collection. Notable tales include "The Exploration of Space" (wherein the narrator is addressed by inter-continuum voyagers via the knight on his chess-board), "Mutation Planet," "The Bees Of Knowledge" and "The Cabinet Of Oliver Naylor." Also included are "All The King's Men," "Me And My Antronoscope" (a device for seeing through solid rock), "Exit From City Five," "An Overload" and "The Problem Of Morley's Emission." Highly recommended.

#### **Star Winds** (DAW, 1978)

Novel. The alchemists were right after all! Starships sail by catching the winds of ether, the "fifth substance" or quintessence. A boy from backward Earth is caught up in the politics and war of the interstellar kingdoms. The threat of the Kerek Mind is countered by the surreptitious work of master alchemists. Disproof of the atomic theory, and the triumph of True Philosophy. Alchemical versions of such familiar sf tropes as lasers and neutronium (= pure, elemental, earth) are a particular delight. Recommended.

#### **The Seed of Evil** (Allison & Busby, 1979)

Collection. Includes the excellent stories "Sporting With the Chid" and "The Radius Riders." Also "The

Seed Of Evil," "Integrity," "Farewell, Dear Brother," "The God Gun," "The Ship That Sailed the Ocean of Space," "Man In Transit," "Wizard Wazo's Revenge," "The Infinite Searchlight," "Perfect Love," "The Countenance" and "Life Trap."

#### **The Pillars of Eternity** (DAW, 1982)

Novel. The Universe is a cycle of eternal recurrence. One man, impelled by an experience of transcendent suffering, attempts to derail the whole thing by carrying out an act of free will. Just one unpredestined act, however tiny, will ensure that he never exists to suffer again... But what is free will?

#### **The Zen Gun** (DAW, 1983)

Novel. Carved from wood, the weapon requires a Zen master to operate it properly. Its powers appear to be infinite. But who will control it – its rightful owner, the animal-cyborg agents of the decadent Empire, or the thingies from a different sort of space who are currently seeping in through the holes opened up by its clumsy misuse? Highly recommended.

#### **The Rod of Light** (Methuen, 1985)

Novel. Darker, more focused, sequel to *The Soul of the Robot*. Super-intelligent robots attempt to steal consciousness from human beings: Jasperodus must decide where his loyalties lie. The nature of consciousness revealed. Recommended. (After publication of this book, contracted by Allison & Busby but not published by them, Bayley took those publishers to court over unpaid royalties, only to see them go promptly bankrupt.)

#### **The Forest of Peldain** (DAW, 1985)

Novel. A fairly minor potboiler concerning a pseudo-intelligent mass of vegetation and the unfortunate consequences of attacking it. Bayley's last new book to date.

